

EXPERT ADVICE

BY PHYLLIS VAN DOREN | ILLUSTRATION BY BLAIR THORNLEY

Back to Nature

5 TOP DESIGNERS
contemplate the outdoor room

With my love of wood, I find most of my inspirations for an outdoor environment from Mother Nature. There are an infinite number of textures and materials found in nature, all tied together with a similar color palette. As in nature, the use of accent colors found in flowers can make the setting come alive.

Outdoor rooms are a great opportunity for homeowners to display their sense of fun. An outdoor space should be relaxing, even visually, so I would limit the amount of furniture. However, the furniture should make a statement while it blends with the overall design. Accent colors can help tie all the elements together.

— *Joseph Bedford, furniture designer
Bedford Built*



One of my passions is helping clients find ways to create outdoor rooms for their homes. Since space is at such a premium in Southern California — where we enjoy some of the world's greatest weather — it only makes sense to treat our outdoor areas as seamless extensions of indoor rooms.

There are two types of outdoor rooms: one type is public, including a well-designed outdoor kitchen with combination-dining space; the second type is more private, epitomized by a small nook off a master bedroom that has a contemplative seating area and possibly (my personal favorite) an outdoor shower or bathtub area.

For public outdoor spaces, the trend I am seeing is to install a focal-point piece such as a wood-fired pizza oven. In those more private outdoor spaces, my essential luxury is an outdoor shower with an oversized rain head, for total immersion on those cool coastal evenings.

— *Phil Rowworthy, president
Fixtures*

Outdoor rooms can be such fun. I love to use bright large print fabrics mixed with calming furniture. For instance, subtle woven resin furniture cushioned with cream Sunbrella fabric with a pop of orange flowers or a bright-pink geometric pattern makes a great place to enjoy the sun. It's very important that you choose true outdoor fabrics made to resist fading and mildew.

Another "wow" effect results if you cluster clever decorative outdoor hanging lights. The cluster should be three to five hanging lights and they all can be different. Don't be afraid to put unique electric lights together.

Iron wall art or iron shelves, plaques or exterior hanging drapery panels can pull together and soften your phenomenal outdoor space.

— *Etta Osborn, Allied Member ASID
CEDO Interior Design*

If you really use your outdoor space, why not dress it up as you would in your living or dining room? Whether you're buying new furniture or working with what you already have, using a new outdoor fabric adds instant mood, sophistication and comfort. Use fabric for your seat cushions, pillows and even outdoor window treatments. In terms of construction, think outside the box. Consider Moroccan-inspired pouf shapes, or add a great trim to pillows and cushions for a more tailored look. Play with using gorgeous tones of turquoise. A blue that looks too cold indoors often shines in sunlight.

Once you have your main color, don't be afraid to mix stripes, solids and patterns. If you often entertain at night, spice it up with a few pillows in a bold pattern; in low light, brighter colors make seating areas more inviting. It's all about creating atmosphere. Whatever your look is, the right fabrics will take it to another level.

— *Amy Meier, owner/designer
Amy Meier Design*



Timeless outdoor spaces feel as if they've grown right up out of the garden. Fabrics and furniture should blend with the landscape and accent pieces (pillows, cushions, outdoor rugs or art) should look like they are in full bloom. This gives year-round color you can change with the seasons. The most beautiful outdoor rooms have an abundance of fire (lighting or a fireplace) and water elements (view of a stream, pool or fountain). Even a small table fountain adds a big effect to the space. Update your outdoor room with more light sources like candles, lanterns, strings of lights, even an outdoor chandelier.

Some of the most interesting outdoor rooms are those that contain unexpected elements. Create a bath retreat with a claw-foot tub and vine-covered trellis; a napping corner with bed and mosquito netting; or a raised platform for morning meditation or yoga. Shade and privacy are important elements to get the most use out of your space.

— *Shauna Piscitello, owner
Living in Balance with Feng Shui*

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